



# California Fair Political Practices Commission

June 17, 1988

Ernest R. Hawkins  
Registrar of Voters  
County of Sacramento  
3700 Branch Center Road  
Sacramento, CA 95827

Re: Your Request for Advice  
Our File No. I-88-196

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

You have requested advice concerning your responsibilities as a filing officer for campaign disclosure statements under the Political Reform Act (the "Act").<sup>1/</sup>

## QUESTION

May a filing officer impose a fee for locating and retrieving a campaign disclosure statement requested by a member of the public?

## CONCLUSION

A filing officer may not impose a fee for locating and for retrieving a campaign disclosure document which has been requested by any person.

## FACTS

You are a filing officer for campaign disclosure statements. You plan to install a computer assisted document storage and retrieval system which will be made available for use by members of the general public in your office during regular business hours. Persons who use the computer system to identify and access campaign disclosure documents will not be charged any fee except ten cents per page for photocopies.

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<sup>1/</sup>Government Code Sections 81000-91015. All statutory references are to the Government Code unless otherwise indicated. Commission regulations appear at 2 California Code of Regulations Section 18000, et seq. All references to regulations are to Title 2, Division 6 of the California Code of Regulations.

### ANALYSIS

As a filing officer for campaign disclosure statements, you are required to provide access for public inspection and reproduction of the disclosure statements. (Sections 81008, 81009, 81010 and Regulation 18110.)

Your letter indicates that you plan to install a computer assisted document storage and retrieval system. Members of the general public who want to research and access campaign disclosure documents filed with your office would be permitted to use the system free of charge during regular business hours. You want to know if it is permissible under the Act to charge a research fee to persons who do not conduct their own research but who request that your staff perform the research for them.

The Act requires that campaign disclosure statements be open for public inspection and reproduction during regular business hours. (Section 81008.) No conditions whatsoever shall be imposed upon persons desiring to inspect or reproduce campaign disclosure statements. (Section 81008.) The only fee which filing officers are authorized to charge is no more than ten cents per page for copies of disclosure documents. (Section 81008.)

The Commission has consistently interpreted Section 81008 to prohibit imposition of monetary charges for staff time to locate and to make available campaign disclosure statements. (See Magana advice letter, No. I-86-115, copy enclosed.) This advice is applied equally to requests made in person at your office and to requests made by other means of communication, such as by telephone or by letter.

A filing officer may not impose a charge for staff time or for other expenses associated with locating campaign disclosure documents which have been requested specifically. However, if a particular request appears to fall outside the boundaries of your duties as a filing officer, we encourage you to contact the Technical Assistance and Analysis Division to receive advice about the limits of your responsibilities.

Earnest R. Hawkins  
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You may be aware that current legislation, SB 2537 (Craven), proposes to authorize filing officers to charge a retrieval fee of up to \$5 per request for requests for documents which are five or more years old. The advice in this letter may be altered if SB 2537 becomes law.

Sincerely,

Diane M. Griffiths  
General Counsel

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce W. Robeck". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

By: Bruce W. Robeck  
Political Reform Consultant

DMG:BWR:kmt  
Enclosures



# COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

VOTER REGISTRATION & ELECTIONS

MAY 21 1 19 PM '88

ERNEST R. HAWKINS  
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

DWIGHT M. BEATTIE  
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR  
OF VOTERS

May 16, 1988

Bruce W. Roebeck  
Political Reform Consultant  
Technical Assistance and Analysis Division  
Fair Political Practices Commission  
428 J Street, Suite 800  
Sacramento, CA 95804

Dear Mr. Roebeck:

At the County Clerks' Association meeting in December, 1987, I inquired about my ability, as a filing officer, to charge a search or research fee in addition to copy charges, under certain circumstances, for campaign disclosure documents.

What I have in mind, is the installation of a computer assisted document storage and retrieval system which would allow the public to enter a candidate, committee, organization, election date or filing date into the computer and to have listed on a screen all of the documents relevant to the inquiry. I propose to make this equipment available during regular business hours free of cost. Copies would be available at \$0.10 each.

If someone did not want to come to my office to do their own search, I would like to recover my staff cost of researching the records.

Would such a charge be inconsistent with the code, regulation or policy?

Very truly yours,

Ernest R. Hawkins  
Registrar of Voters



# California Fair Political Practices Commission

May 27, 1988

Ernest R. Hawkins  
Registrar of Voters  
County of Sacramento  
3700 Branch Center Road  
Sacramento, CA 95827

Re: 88-196

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

Your letter requesting advice under the Political Reform Act was received on May 21, 1988 by the Fair Political Practices Commission. If you have any questions about your advice request, you may contact me directly at (916) 322-5662.

We try to answer all advice requests promptly. Therefore, unless your request poses particularly complex legal questions, or more information is needed, you should expect a response within 21 working days if your request seeks formal written advice. If more information is needed, the person assigned to prepare a response to your request will contact you shortly to advise you as to the information needed. If your request is for informal assistance, we will answer it as quickly as we can. (See Commission Regulation 18329 (2 Cal. Code of Regs. Sec. 18329).)

You also should be aware that your letter and our response are public records which may be disclosed to the public upon receipt of a proper request for disclosure.

Very truly yours,

*Jeanne Pritchard* by *alt*  
Jeanne Pritchard  
Chief  
Technical Assistance and Analysis  
Division

JP:ld



# COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

## VOTER REGISTRATION & ELECTIONS

MAY 21 1 19 PM '88

ERNEST R. HAWKINS  
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

DWIGHT M. BEATTIE  
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May 16, 1988

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